



THE WAY OF ST. PAUL



Frequently Asked Questions

What exactly is “The Way of St. Paul”?

The Way of St. Paul is an innovative church initiative designed to help churches grow in strength, effectiveness and numbers. It is based on three ideas: a) the work that produces growth takes time to “take root” (18-36 months at a minimum); b) successful work can only be accomplished by a team of 4-10 people (depending on the size of the congregation) **always led by the rector or senior pastor**; and c) that Episcopalians can learn to joyfully help others become committed followers of Jesus Christ, growing their own faith along the way.

Is this an “out of the box” program?

Absolutely not! It is designed to prepare each congregation to meet the unique growth challenges of its time and place. In the Way of St. Paul, each team prepares for its work with a period of intensive spiritual growth in Christ. From that experience, the team then discovers and discerns where God’s redemptive, liberating work is going on in the lives of their neighbors (inside and outside the congregation) and creates projects and relationships to help God in that work. This effort may or may not turn into new Christians - that’s up to God - but it prepares fertile ground for authentic exploration of Christianity as an option.

How will it help my congregation grow?

Church growth experts like Reggie McNeal tell us that the successful, healthy congregation of the future will be externally focused (looking to what God is doing in the world and joining in); will devote all of its programs to developing people, particularly forming them in their Christian faith; and will employ new kinds of leadership that facilitate a focus on mission over maintenance - leading a movement as much as an institution. The Way of St. Paul is designed to help establish that culture in a congregation.

What will we get from our work?

While it might be great to be able to say “if you do this work, you’ll grow by 25% in a year” or “you’ll double your pledging membership in five years,” church growth really doesn’t work that way. As the Bible says, we do the planting and watering, while God provides the growth. What you will get initially is spiritual growth, new learning, and a sense of optimism. Way of St. Paul congregations often report a general increase in congregational creativity and hopefulness. Of course, our vision is an increase the number of people who commit themselves to Christ and His Church - and don’t tell anyone, but we hope they’ll do that with us!

What’s the time commitment?

Teams are expected to commit themselves for a minimum of 18 months, and encouraged to continue for a total of 36 months. This may seem like a long time, but healthy cultural change in an existing congregation is a delicate matter that takes time and a great deal of conversation, prayer and

thoughtful effort. Team commitments vary, but a regular monthly meeting is the minimum, plus an annual retreat with the team's coach (and diocesan staff, when available) and a tune-up day or two scattered here and there. While there will be peak work times and rest times, team members should expect to spend an average of two hours per week on this effort over the 18 months - time well spent just for the personal spiritual growth alone!

What does it cost to participate?

While costs for The Way of St. Paul are heavily subsidized by The Diocese of New Jersey, churches should expect to allocate \$150 - 200 per month to the project over the course of the work. This of course does not cover all the administrative expenses, but it does help with compensation for time and mileage for your growth coach. Subsidies are available for small congregations that struggle with budgets, but congregations with endowments and other resources are expected to allocate part of them as an investment in their future growth.

Who should be on our team?

First, it's essential to pray about this and ask God's guidance. It is strongly recommended that the congregation set this work as a top priority (because when you think about it, it needs to be). With that, we encourage you choose from your best, most dedicated and energetic leaders, giving them an 18-month break from their current duties to attend exclusively to the long-term life of their church. Also, identify long-time members who long to help people grow in their relationship with Christ. And newer members are often very excited about this work.

What's our coach's role?

As part of this process, you will develop a long-term relationship with one of our diocesan-certified growth coaches. These men and women are a) serious about their own discipleship, b) dedicated to helping new people become committed followers of Christ, c) trained in advanced coaching techniques, and d) familiar with cutting edge principles of church growth, including adaptive leadership, the "missional church" movement and congregational motivation.

Who can I talk with to find out more?

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